



STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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February 18, 2003
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Present: Bloechle, Christensen, Curry, Fox, Gieschen, Grone, Ham, Jelinek, Kolb, Littlebeaver, Lloyd, Rasmussen, Shepard, Schultz, Vavrina

Absent: Berger, Hultine, Nolan Brown, Sorensen

I. *Public Comment*

There was no public comment.

II. Approval of Agenda

Additions: New Business E. Social Security Information(*Alvin Fox*)

A motion to approve the agenda as amended was made by Fox and seconded by Bloechle. Motion passed.

III. Approval of Minutes from December 17, 2002

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Jelinek and seconded by Bloechle. Motion passed.

IV. Director's Report (*Frank Lloyd*)

1. **Front End Process** – VR has defined this process as the point in time a consumer contacts VR to the signing of IPE. VR is currently working with CAP to increase staff use of the Hotline for Disability Services in identifying the resources a person needs to achieve their rehabilitation goal. Three things have been identified to increase the use of the Hotline: 1) a direct hotline button has been added to the VR internal website; 2) VR is developing a worksheet for consumers and staff to use that corresponds with the Work Considerations list in the Self Exploration workbook. The worksheet will help the client identify topic areas that will lead to Hotline resources on the website; 3) adding to the Hotline website a “shopping cart” concept where the consumers can check resources of value to add to their shopping cart and then print out the contacts and phone numbers for future reference.

VR is hoping this will help VR staff become more familiar with using the hotline to identify resources. Shari Bahensky will be providing training to each of the offices about the local resources available.

2. **Back End Process** – VR has defined this process as everything a consumer experiences while services are being provided such as job planning, the job search, job retention, etc. VR has a committee working on a process to establish standards, processes, and training around all of the activities involved. VR will be bringing more information to the council at future meetings. The development of the Back End Process will be similar to the work that has occurred with the Front End Process.
3. **Statewide Services Delivery Plan** – Frank distributed a plan identifying how VR will be serving clients in the future. The changes are not a cost effectiveness issue but an issue of equitable distribution of resources across the state. It summarizes strategic changes in recent years and current changes that will enhance the services delivery system. Frank updated the council on the closing of the three satellite offices in McCook, Chadron, and O'Neill. Itinerate space has been identified in those areas of the state where VR staff will continue to provide services. In addition, staff in the the Hastings and Grand Island offices will now all be housed in Grand Island in the new Central East office. The consolidations will save VR approximately \$50,000.00 per year in operations and leasing expenses. Several counties have also been reassigned to different VR offices.

4. **Transition Services** – The *Making It Work* publication continues to receive positive feedback statewide. VR plans to continue developing the publication which has approximately 1600 subscribers.

The Transition Planners were developed for staff to use as a tool for planning VR services in the schools. VR has also received positive feedback from educators and parents on the planners. A second printing is planned for this summer following the evaluation of changes provided by staff and educators that will improve the publication. The intent is to distribute the planner to all special education teachers for use next fall.

5. **Disaster Plan** – In the case of a disaster (red alert) and possible closing of the State Office Building, VR state office staff plan to work out of the VR field office on 48th street. The VR information system could be backed up hourly and could be operated from the 48th street location.
6. **Budget Update** – The Governor has recommended a 7.5% cut for VR. This would result in a loss of \$291,000.00 in state funds and \$1,075,559.00 in matching federal funds, for a total loss of \$1,366,657.00. Each dollar of state funds cut loses \$3.69 in federal funds. Frank mentioned an article in the Lincoln Journal Star which listed the loss of these federal funds as #7 on a list of the worst proposed cuts.

A motion was made by Bloechle and seconded by Kolb that the council send a letter to the Appropriations Committee and Governor regarding the impact of VR losing their federal funds. Motion passed.

7. **Order of Selection Issues** – VR is currently under an Order of Selection. Federal requirements say VR should serve everyone, but if that is not possible due to budget, then people must be served in an order based on severity of their disability. The federal regulations allow each state to come up with their own definition of severe for order of selection. Each state defines order of selection differently, such as by number of functional limitation, number of disabilities, or by number of services a person might need. Nebraska has defined order of selection by how severely the disability impacts the persons ability to return to work. There are three priority levels in NE: 1) most significant, 2) significant, and 3) everyone else. NE has been serving the top two groups (most significant and significant) since the order of selection was implemented. People in the third category are put on a waiting list and typically have not been served. There is a potential that the order of selection will have to be tightened even more based on possible budget cuts. VR is considering several ways to do this and requested input from the council.

VR is considering making changes to who is being served from the 1st two groups (most significant and significant) to just the 1st group (most significant). This would mean people in groups 2 and 3 would be put on a waiting list instead of just people in group 3. People would be placed on the waiting list by date of eligibility.

VR is also discussing continuing to provide services to consumers determined to be “low cost” or “no cost” cases. NE VR staff provide a lot of direct services (i.e., independent living, job placement, counseling, evaluation, etc.) to consumers. In other states, these services are typically purchased, not provided directly by VR staff. In these situations, if a consumer is at the 2nd level (significant) and on the waiting list, but require only team services, VR would go ahead and provide those services even though they are on the waiting list.

In QUEST, the team services have been separated from the community services. Even with team services, there are associated support costs, such as interview clothing or transportation. If the order of selection is changed, VR has discussed the possibility of continuing the team services and providing some support costs associated with those services. There is concern that starting services on a no cost case could result in unanticipated costs (e.g., job coaching), which VR would have to fund. VR cannot start providing services on a potential no cost case, and then when unexpected costs occur, deny funding those costs.

The council discussed whether it could be the consumers choice to be taken off the waiting list and provided no cost service, then put back on the waiting list if additional services are identified that need funding. Don indicated that a summary of VR’s position will be brought to the April meeting for the council to discuss and comment on.

V. Old Business

A. Front End Process Presentation (*Dennis King*)

Dennis King gave the council an overview of the Front End Process which starts at the time a consumer initiates contact with VR and ends at the time a plan is written. The process is made up of different areas including referral, orientation, work incentives awareness, eligibility interview, and self exploration. VR began revising these processes because approximately 40% of the individuals who came to VR for services were dropping out before a plan was developed. For those who completed a plan, approximately 65% were successful. This data would suggest that assisting consumers to the point where a plan is developed will increase their chance of success.

The revised process was started in Norfolk in May, 2002 on one of 3 teams. During the past 5 weeks the process has been introduced to 3 teams in the Omaha office. Several changes to the process have been made during this time as a result of input from VR staff. A motion was made by Grone and seconded by Littlebeaver that the next draft of the Self Exploration Workbook be distributed to the council for review. Motion passed.

B. Social Security Work Incentives (*Dennis King*)

VR has a grant with Easter Seals for the provision of Benefits Analysis. Approximately 22-25% of the consumers VR works with receive SSI/SSDI. NE VR has put a lot of resources into training staff and having available at least one person on each team who has some knowledge about work incentives and how they can be used to assist someone in transitioning from benefits to work. VR believes it is important to help individuals who come to VR make an informed decision about how potential income will affect their benefits. The Easter Seals staff has the resources, knowledge, and training to provide scenario development for consumers to help them make this decision. Through the grant, VR consumers receive help determining the impact to their benefits if they work full time or above the SGA. To date the grant has served approximately 15-20 consumers.

C. PILS JAM (*Sue Gieschen*)

The Joint Agency Meeting sponsored by PILS will be at Chadron State College on May 1. Sue will attend as the SRC representative. Exhibitors and vendors will be available with dinner at 5:00 and the meeting scheduled for 6:00.

VI. Reports

A. Committee Reports

Interagency Outreach Committee – Over the past few months the committee has looked at other agencies and organizations and the quality of their relationship with VR. A survey has been completed that will be sent to referral sources to gather information. The committee will review the surveys as they are returned and report the results to the council.

At the last meeting, the committee presented recommendations to the council for action. Since the last meeting, Jack received information from Dennis Dunn indicating some of the recommendations may not be able to be done, such as, doing away with the Other category as a referral sources. Frank indicated this will added to the agenda to be discussed at the monthly management tour with the office directors. A motion was made by Shepard and seconded by Curry that the recommendations be given to VR for appropriate action.

Strategic Issues Committee – A proposal with was distributed prior to the meeting for the council to consider. After discussion, a motion was made by Fox and seconded by Kolb that the Council accept the priority areas offered by the committee.

Mark will develop an informative letter regarding the cuts in VR funding for Sue and Frank to review.

Client Service Delivery Committee – The committee made inquiries of the VR offices concerning Employment Warranty, what it involves, what type of contact was made, what time, what letter form is used, etc. The committee reviewed the input sent in by the offices and will get together before the next meeting to draft a sample letter based on this input. The draft will be presented to the council at the next meeting. The committee recommends a phone call be the first option of inquiry, then the letter.

B. CAP Report (*Vicki Rasmussen*)

The CAP report was distributed prior to the meeting. The council had no questions.

C. SILC Report (*Tim Kolb*)

The SILC is going through a transition with management company changes. They are exploring options such as finding another management service, or hiring an Executive Director and renting office space/equipment. A decision will be made by the end of month.

The SILC will be working on the 2004-2007 State Plan.

D. ATP Report (*Mark Schultz*)

The AbilityQUEST conference is scheduled for May 7-9. Registration material will be distributed next week.

ATP continues to set up computer equipment in the one stop centers. In the next two months the first 12 centers will be set up and staff trained on how to operate the

equipment. The next step will be training staff on how and when to make referrals to VR, ATP, and NCBVI.

VII. New Business

A. State Plan and Policy Issues (*Don Crouch*)

1. Public Forum Topics

VR is required by federal law to gather public input. Public meetings have been scheduled across the state to gather input, specifically on the following issues:

- 1) How can VR be most effective in helping SSI/SSDI beneficiaries go to work;
- 2) How should VR deal with reductions and loss of services and supports from other public agencies;
- 3) How should VR deal with the increasing costs of goods and services.

At the next meeting, VR will bring feedback from the public meetings and state plan supplements to the council for approval.

The council suggested that VR consider having the public hearings the same month every year so disability groups and advocates can plan for them.

B. Rule 72 Changes (*Don Crouch*)

Rule 72 contains the rules for VR in terms of cost containment. VR is considering several changes based on issues that have come up. At the next council meeting, VR will bring to the council proposed changes for Rule 72 for their input. If council members have suggestions for changes related to cost containment, they can be forwarded to Don or brought to the next council meeting.

C. VR Program Performance Statistics (*Frank Lloyd*)

A handout regarding VR's performance statistics was distributed with the meeting material. For FY02, the number of successful employment outcomes was 1490. Frank discussed the performance statistics with the council.

D. Meeting Location for April SRC Meeting (*Sue Geischen*)

The council discussed meeting at a location outside of Lincoln for one meeting each year. It was suggested that the council wait until their September/October meeting to do this and meeting at the new VR Central East office in Grand Island.

E. Social Security Information(*Alvin Fox*)

Alvin mentioned that www.onestops.info is a website for information and new updates on social security. Don informed council members that the distribution of tickets in Nebraska has been delayed. They were scheduled to be issued in June/July but now they will be issued in November.

A motion to adjourn was made by Shepard and seconded by Curry. Meeting adjourned at 3:00.